

1

Z

1241

.S65

The background of the entire page is a dense, intricate marbled paper pattern. It features a complex, organic design with swirling, cell-like or stone-like shapes in various shades of gray, black, and white, creating a textured and visually busy appearance.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

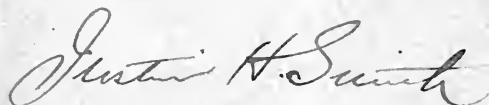
<http://www.archive.org/details/sourcesforhistor00smitrich>

SOURCES FOR A HISTORY OF THE MEXICAN WAR, 1846-1848

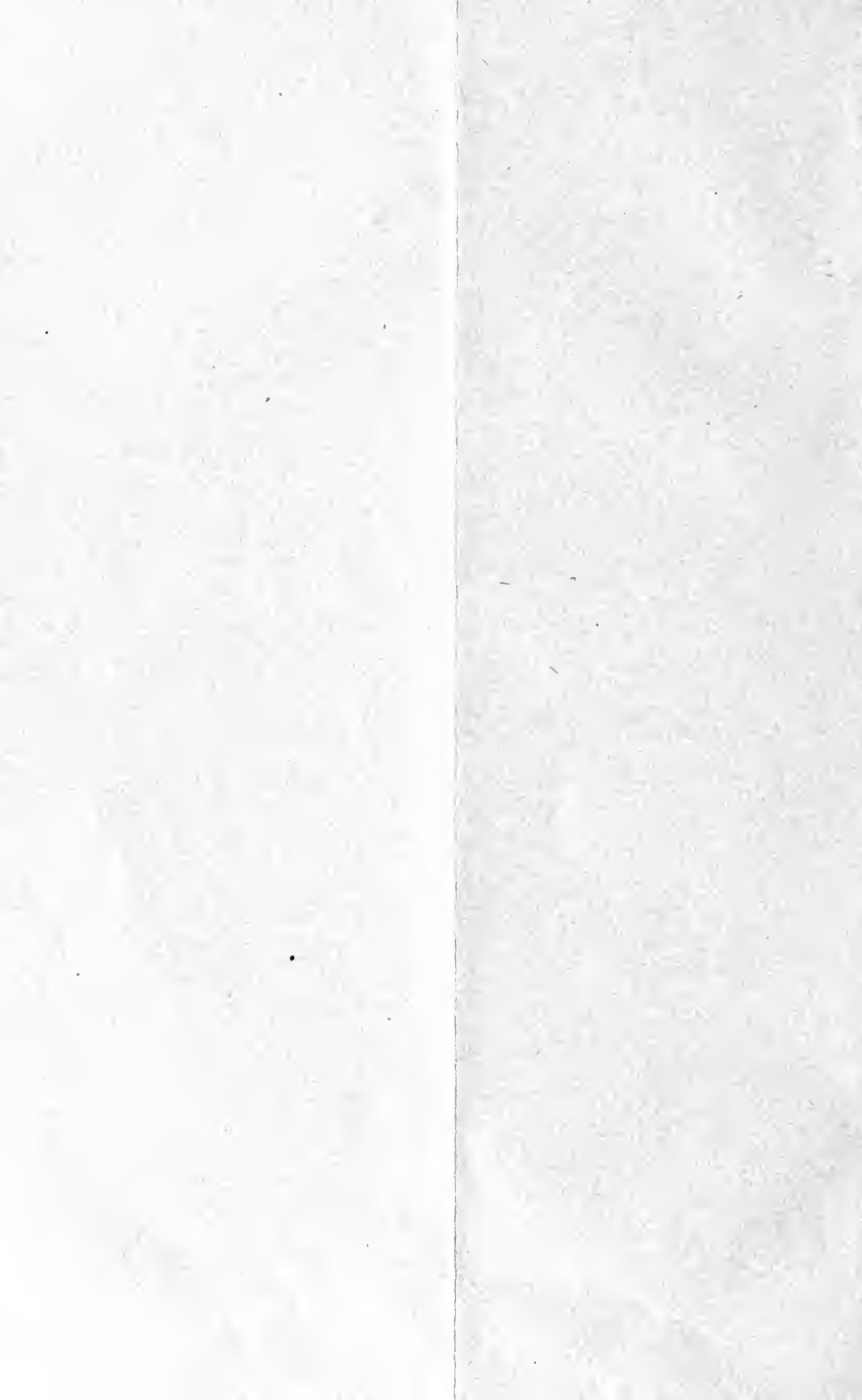
BY

JUSTIN H. SMITH

With the Compliments of

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Justin H. Smith". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the printed text "With the Compliments of".

Reprinted from THE MILITARY HISTORIAN & ECONOMIST
January, 1916, Vol. 1, pp. 18-32 .



21271
565

SOURCES FOR A HISTORY OF THE MEXICAN WAR, 1846-1848

JUSTIN H. SMITH

Our war of 1846-48 has often been regarded as an isolated event, merely an episode in our history; and to a considerable extent so it was. We fought and we made conquests of value; but neither war nor conquest was an essential part of our national policy. We can lay our fingers upon the causes of the war one by one, and its results are equally within compass. No foreign nation became involved, nor did serious complications of any sort grow out of the affair. In short, it was much like a small, though vigorous, New England thunderstorm, made up of local currents and a few black, tufted clouds, which overwhelms some valley with darkness, roar and flood, yet is plainly visible in its entirety from the neighboring mountain. For this reason the subject possesses a rare attractiveness for the investigator, so often baffled or embarrassed by the reach of his vistas; while at the same time, as will presently appear, certain peculiar subtleties create a special interest of precisely the opposite kind.

However limited in length and breadth, the war had, of course, manifold aspects, and the fields of inquiry that must be cultivated are equally manifold. On the diplomatic side we find the series of causal events, the repeated attempts of our government to end hostilities, and the final armistice and treaty,—a treaty rendered supremely difficult and almost impossible by extraordinary circumstances; and we find also broader outlooks resulting from the Oregon issue, our blockade of Mexico's ports, her privateering schemes, foreign attempts to interfere, the dream of combining the Spanish-American states against us, and the plans to obtain in one way or another European assistance for Mexico. The subject of military operations includes not only marches, battles and sieges, strategy and tactics, arms and ammunition, camps and fortifications, but roads, bridges and transportation in a country widely different from our own, and various questions connected with

the composition, organization and training of the armies. The navy of the United States had, indeed, no antagonist upon its own element, but it was compelled to undertake important military operations and assume fiscal and political functions, while the principal work in its proper field—that of the blockade—was made especially interesting by the extent of the coast, the tempests, bars and shoals, and the character of the rivers. These last facts bring us in turn to geography and topography, and we discover much here that requires unusual attention.

Physically Mexico is an astonishing country, and it presented to our troops very sharp and varied embarrassments: climates changing in the course of a day's march, mountains, defiles, deserts, marshes, lava-beds, thorny chaparral, edible products offering nourishment to some and poison to others, tropical storms and untropical droughts, animals like ours in name but not in quality, extraordinary opportunities for self-indulgence and extraordinary diseases. In the realm of politics each country shows us—in 1846-48, of course—its parties and partisans engaged in cunning and often unscrupulous manoeuvres, complicated further by personal and sectional ambitions; we have to trace out the mysterious ways of legislators and rulers; and we are also confronted with the problems of governing a conquered population. Akin to these arise social questions of a subtle and profound character. The Mexicans are not only foreign to us but intrinsically peculiar,—combining the Spaniard, the Moor and the Indian, and including other strains also here and there; and their peculiarities must be seen and felt. The evolution of the Mexican world of 1846 needs to be understood and its characteristics noted. The attempts to make the war a conflict of race and religion; the presence of many Roman Catholics among our people and our troops; the existence of slavery here and its non-existence there; and the effects of daily intercourse between Americans and Mexicans during our occupation of extensive districts, must all be given due study; and moreover under this head it should be remembered that the American people were not at that date precisely what they are now.

Financially, the support of the war involved singular difficulties in both countries. Mexico had to fight on a general basis of bankruptcy; and the United States prepared for the extra expense by adopting a low tariff and experimenting with other important fiscal measures. How both sides got on as well as they did requires to be ascertained. The personal characteristics and personal relations of the chief actors in the drama had, of course, vital bearings on the events; and, last but perhaps not least in this partial catalogue, we desire to know with what sentiments the progress and the consequences of our operations were viewed by foreign governments and nations. On all these topics information is available, and we may now take up the sources relating to each of them, dealing first with the manuscripts.

Many of the diplomatic papers referring to the war have been published, but many have not; and, aside from the desirability of collating the former with the originals, in not a few cases highly significant portions were omitted in the printing. One has recourse, then, to the archives of the State Department, and must obtain access "without restriction" to the papers. These include not only communications between the government and its diplomatic and consular representatives, but the instructions to and letters from our confidential agents, notes to and from the foreign legations at Washington, Report Books, Confidential Report Books, Domestic Letter Books, Miscellaneous Letters and replies, and the circulars issued to our representatives in foreign parts. The countries concerned are Mexico, Great Britain, France, Spain (including Cuba), and the Republic of Texas; and the period to be covered extends from the beginning of the international relations of Mexico to 1848 inclusively.¹ Indexes

¹Great Britain, having immense interests in Mexico and feeling apprehensive lest the United States should gain large accessions of territory at the expense of our neighbor, was profoundly concerned about our relations with that country. In France, the King and Guizot, his chief minister, felt strongly disposed to oblige England, and also entertained the idea of extending to this continent the balance-of-power system that reigned in Europe, while Thiers and others, voicing the popular sentiment, were cold toward England, friendly toward the United States and anxious to use as a political weapon the tendency of the government to concern itself in a pro-British manner with the difficulties between this country and Mexico. Spain and

afford some assistance but do not mention everything of importance. One must examine the papers in detail; and this rule holds good in every other collection of official documents as well,—in many instances, indeed, far more truly. Some important diplomatic papers are outside the archives of the State Department. For instance, Mackenzie's reports on his mission to Santa Anna in 1846 are among the Polk papers, now belonging to the Library of Congress; and the personal papers of certain American diplomats are precious supplements to their official despatches. Among these are Poinsett's (Pennsylvania Historical Society), Bancroft's (Massachusetts Historical Society), Trist's (Library of Congress), Larkin's (Bancroft Collection, University of California) and Wheaton's (Massachusetts Historical Society). Mexico also has published a portion of her diplomatic correspondence in this field, but the archives, although removals and damage resulting from the political vicissitudes of the country have caused numerous gaps, afford much additional information. They are found naturally in charge of the Department of Foreign Relations (*Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores*).

Here, however, the inquiry by no means comes to an end. From 1825 on, Great Britain held a very strong position in Mexico; and her ministers at that post made frequent and full reports. Able, comparatively impartial, close to the heart of things, and for every reason anxious to ascertain and state the truth, they give us the best "inside" views of persons and events that we can find; and they not only had a great deal to say about our relations with that unfortunate country, but at certain critical times played an important rôle in its counsels. Besides, England exerted herself at Washington, at Paris and with our representatives at Mexico; and hence, for the

the Spanish took far less interest in the matter, though hopes were entertained that fear of the United States might draw Mexico, and indeed all the Spanish-American states, toward and possibly to the mother-country. They felt sympathy for the Mexicans, but could not forget that Mexico had rebelled. Prussia had a representative in Mexico but did not wish to become or have him become, involved in difficulties there. With what indifference she held aloof may be ascertained conveniently from the Wheaton papers (Massachusetts Historical Society). The countries of Central and South America took surprisingly little interest in the war.

best of reasons, these reports, preserved with the other Foreign Office Papers at the Public Record Office, London, must be thoroughly studied.

The corresponding French documents (kept in the Archives du Département des Affaires Etrangères, Paris) are much less valuable, for the agents of France were inferior men, their relations with the Mexican government—in addition to suffering from quarrels and a war—were seldom intimate, and the reports for 1846-48, being in the same volume as papers not open to the public, cannot be seen; but on several matters, particularly while Poinsett was the American minister at that capital, they present valuable information. Spain did not recognise Mexico until 1836, and for a long time after that date was looked upon with just suspicion; for a strong monarchical party existed in Mexico, leaning naturally toward the mother-country, and she not only entertained hopes but made efforts to set up a Bourbon prince in her one-time colony; but there was no difference of sentiment in regard to the United States and kinship counted for much. The reports of the Spanish legation, therefore, especially since it had charge for a considerable time of French interests also, cannot be ignored. Space may perhaps be taken for a single illustration of this fact. Wonder has often been felt that Castillo y Lanzas, the Mexican Minister of Relations, who was known to favor a peaceful settlement with this country, should have addressed the hostile and insulting note of March 12, 1846, to our minister, Slidell,—the last important communication received by us from his government before the outbreak of hostilities; but it appears from the despatch of Señor D. Salvador Bermúdez de Castro, the Spanish minister, No. 218 (Res.), of March 29, that he himself put order and iron into the irresolute and almost incoherent draft of Castillo, and that he did so with the expectation, not of a war, but of arbitration. These despatches are at the Archivo Particular del Ministerio de Estado, Madrid. As regards Cuba, some interesting documents may be found in the National Archives of that Republic.²

² The author extended his inquiries to Colombia and Peru, but with only negative results.

Next we come to the field of military operations. Although numerous works have been written upon the Mexican War, none of their authors has gone through the military archives of either government, but it does not by any means follow that the archives are of slight significance. To be sure, a great number of the papers were made public; but a great number were not, while omissions and the printer's inaccuracies impair the value of too many published reports.³ The historian must go, therefore, to the War Department at Washington, and examine one by one the following papers, most of which are in charge of the Adjutant General: Secretary of War's files, Adjutant General's files, Military Book, Adjutant General's Miscellany (principally Discontinued Commands), General Orders, Order Books, Quartermaster General's files, Judge Advocate General's files, Records of Courts Martial and Courts of Inquiry, and Engineer's files, going back in certain cases as far as the early part of 1845. The number of these documents is large; and to them must be added not only the records and archives of State governments, but the papers of officials, officers and soldiers (especially diaries), reposing in archives, libraries, the vaults of historical societies and the closets of private individuals all over the country. This last branch of the investigation is naturally most slow and tedious, and it requires the kind co-operation of many personal and professional friends.⁴ Among those which may be discovered are unpublished papers of such men as Marcy, Taylor, Conner, Pillow, Duncan, Quitman, Pierce, Hitchcock, Jefferson Davis, Braxton Bragg, Robert Anderson, S. E. Chamberlain, P. G. T. Beauregard, D. H. Hill, G. B. McClellan, W. B. Campbell, B. S. Roberts and W. R. Caswell. For the southwest, particular recourse must be had to the Bancroft Collection.

³ See a brief article by the present writer in the *American Historical Review* of October, 1915.

⁴ The present writer advertised and also addressed a letter to every Mexican War survivor with a view to learning of documents, and in these ways obtained valuable results.

Still more numerous are the Mexican military documents.* The chief body of these exists in what is known as Fracción I. of the War Department archives (National Palace, Mexico), imperfectly arranged in thick bundles called *Legajos* or else piled without any classification at all in a heap upstairs;† but other important papers are in charge of the General Staff, in the Archivo General (particularly the proceedings of many courts martial), and the National Library; while nearly all of the maps that one desires to see belong now to the Cartographical Section of the Fomento Department. The State archives also are to be consulted. While those of Puebla and of Vera Cruz (the latter kept at Jalapa) seem to be nearly or perhaps quite complete, others have suffered more or less from accident and revolution; but the custom of sending duplicates of official communications to all the States affords a ground for believing that little has really been lost. The city archives, especially in the districts entered by our forces, must likewise be searched. In all, the present writer probably examined more than 80,000 such Mexican documents and found some 8,000 of them valuable. In addition to the American and Mexican sources, the diplomatic and consular reports of the British, French and Spanish agents have something to say regarding the military operations.

For the work of our fleets one studies the archives of the Navy Department,—particularly the Squadron Letters, Captains' Letters and Confidential Letter Books. In Mexico the navy was an insignificant concern, and its affairs were controlled by the same department (*Guerra y Marina*) as those of the army. Some details are discovered in the local Mexican archives also, and in the foreign diplomatic and consular reports; the papers of the British Admiralty Office, preserved in the Public Record Office at London, throw light upon Cali-

* A word should be said here with reference to the broadmindedness of President Porfirio Diaz, without whose assistance a thorough examination of the Mexican papers would have been impossible. When assured that the results of the investigation would be stated impartially, he promised me all the aid in his power. This meant everything; and not only were the national archives thrown open, but I was able to travel about with a certificate that I had the approbation of the government, which gave me access to State and city archives and all the contents of the public libraries.

† The arrangement may have been changed since my visit,

fornia affairs, the capture of Vera Cruz, the blockade and some other matters; and in the National Archives at Madrid may be found correspondence relating to the blockade and to rumors of privateering enterprises in Cuban ports.

On both sides, the political aspects of the war are remarkably interesting. With reference to American affairs the inquirer should examine the files of the national Senate and House, and the House manuscripts turned over to the Library of Congress, though—to tell the truth—he will find them disappointing. The reports of the British minister at Washington, who stood in close relations with leading Whigs, afford a good deal of information at times; and still more can be derived from the papers of Jackson (though he died before the war actually began), Van Buren, Crittenden, Hammond, Polk, McLean, Clay, Fairfield, Clayton, Webster and Welles (all of which are accessible at the Library of Congress), Bancroft (Massachusetts Historical Society), Buchanan (Pennsylvania Historical Society) and other more or less prominent politicians. As for Mexico, the Department of Gobernación (that is to say, *Relaciones Interiores*) has many documents relating to the internal affairs of the country. Among them, for instance, is a full official account of the meeting of the Governors called by the President in 1847 to discuss the question of making peace. In this field also the diplomatic and consular reports already several times mentioned are positively invaluable. The present writer was permitted to examine the papers—most of them belonging to the distinguished historical author, Señor D. Genaro García—of such persons as Santa Anna, Paredes and Anaya; and still others exist in public libraries, like those of Pérez de Acal at Guadalajara. On the state of things in California the Bancroft Collection has much to give. For the political aspects of the American occupation the reports of our officers and the local Mexican archives are requisite. On the social and financial sides of the war much is to be learned from the political sources already mentioned, but these topics will be taken up more fully below. For the views and sentiments entertained abroad one examines first

of all the diplomatic correspondence, and then one supplements this with published material.

We come now to the printed sources, which it is obviously impossible to describe adequately within the limits of this article. The most important class is naturally books, and these—it need not be said—are of every kind and every degree of merit. At the head stand our Congressional publications,—the President's Messages, the proceedings of the Legislative branch and the Executive Documents, Reports and Miscellany of the Senate and House. In these many and bulky volumes one finds official, though not for that reason necessarily correct, data upon every phase of the conflict with Mexico. The debates of Congress were almost interminable and full of repetition, errors and unreason, but they must be sifted, and they repay the trouble. Not less important are such biographies as Colton's *Clay*, Coleman's *Crittenden*, Meade's *Meade* and even Claiborne's *Quitman*, for they include many first-hand documents; but it must be remembered that we cannot collate these with the originals. On the same plane stand volumes like McCall's *Letters From the Frontiers*, Sedgwick's *Correspondence*, Buchanan's *Works* (edited by J. B. Moore), and Ramírez' *México durante su Guerra con los Estados Unidos*. Several histories of the war contain similar material, and a few, though based upon a very incomplete knowledge of the sources, were composed by participants and therefore to a certain extent may be classed as themselves first-hand. These, however, were very likely—like Ripley's, which aimed to exalt Pillow and discredit Scott, or Semmes's, written under the magnetic influence of Worth—to be tinctured with the personal and political prejudices and passions of the day, and it is frequently impossible to determine where the author's observation ended and hearsay began. On the Mexican side there are numerous volumes of *Memorias*, official reports of the executive departments, often accompanied with documents, and other publications issued by authority; and there are numerous biographies, autobiographies and histories of more or less value. Negrete's *Invasión de los Norte-Americanos en México* contains more documents than any other work

on the subject, but they were carelessly printed. The book of Roa Bárcena, that issued by fifteen collaborators under the title *Apuntes para la Historia de la Guerra entre México y los Estados-Unidos*, and the first-hand narrative of Balbontín are of much worth.

On the political side we find histories, biographies and special studies in profusion, and while many are generous with mistakes and prejudices, few indeed are destitute of value, and in proportion as one advances in his mastery of the subject, the danger of using them diminishes. On strategy and tactics the list of works is large, but those recommended to graduates of West Point by a board of officers, in addition to some of later dates, Scott's *Tactics* the knowledge which a competent historian would naturally possess, that derived from the Mexican War material itself and that obtained by consulting military experts, may be deemed sufficient. The forces engaged were small and the operations comparatively simple. Most of the reports were prepared for—and many by—persons but slightly versed in the art of war, and nearly all of the necessary criticism has already been offered by military men. Vattel's *Droit des Gens* embodies the accepted international law of the period. Books of travel from Humboldt's down, with maps, geographical treatises and military reports—particularly those of the American engineers, many of which are still in manuscript at the Engineer's Office, War Department, Washington—give an excellent if not adequate view of the physical features of the country; and histories, biographies and books of travel, supplemented with the American, British, French and Spanish reports, our military accounts of the occupation and incidental points in other material, present an abundance of data out of which, if one be properly grounded to interpret them, the necessary social atmosphere can be manufactured.

With books go pamphlets, which were far more important in Mexico than among us, and contained military and political facts and views not elsewhere to be discovered. Such transient publications, which fell in the streets of Mexico at certain crises like autumn leaves, perish easily; but a great many

have found safe lodging places in the National Library and the National Museum of that city, in municipal libraries, in the Bancroft Collection and in private hands. The list of books and pamphlets which the thorough historian would feel bound to study includes about 1,000 or 1,100 titles according to one's method of reckoning, though naturally others would be examined.

Pamphlets bring us to periodicals. These include the long list of magazines published in all the countries mentioned, in which many first-hand papers and not a few interesting facts and ideas are presented; but the only periodicals of which it is necessary to speak at any length are the newspapers. Many diplomatic, military and naval documents of an official character appeared in their columns, but these will have been discovered elsewhere in a more authentic form. Such is not the case, however, with an almost endless number of unofficial communications from the army and the navy. It hardly need be said that careless, designing and boastful persons walked about and wrote letters two generations ago as actively as now. We of today could not reasonably hope to enjoy a monopoly of such news. But accounts like those contributed to the New Orleans *Picayune* by its travelling editors or its correspondent "H." (Haile), those in the *Delta* of the same city from "Mustang" (Freaner), those in the New York *Spirit of the Times*, which are known to have come from Captain Henry, an excellent officer, and others whose authors are found to have been careful and intelligent men, are entitled to a fair share of credence. Robert E. Lee was among these anonymous writers. On political and social questions the newspapers must be considered invaluable, provided a sufficient number of them are compared. The leading journals in the United States, Mexico, England and France need to be examined day by day during the continuance of the war,—indeed, for some time before and after it; and many others must be read at certain periods.⁷ All sections, parties

⁷ For the United States the two most important journals were the *National Intelligencer* (Whig) and *Union* (Democratic) of Washington, and these may be examined at the Library of Congress. The *Picayune* and other newspapers of New Orleans, which for geographical reasons were of special value,

and influential shades of opinion need to be considered in each of these countries. Financial information, too, must be sought for not only in the statements of ministers of the treasury here and elsewhere and the rather slight information given by histories and magazines devoted to money, banking and finance, but in the daily fluctuations of the markets and the daily comments of the money "article." Summing up, then, the documents printed and in manuscript, and including those others which bear upon the annexation of Texas—an integral part of the subject—one must admit that the number is rather large.

Our final category of sources is the personal. A record was imprinted on the minds of participants in the war, and this also is worthy of attention. During the past ten years the present writer has talked with not a few of the veterans, both American and Mexican. Testimony relating to events of so distant a period should, of course, be viewed with a most critical eye. As a rule it is without historical value. Some men forget what occurred, and others recollect admirably what did not occur. But occasionally a veteran's mind is perfectly clear in reference to events that impressed themselves upon it with peculiar distinctness and have frequently been recalled to his memory, and here and there he can fill a gap in harmony with all the documents. This class of sources is now, however, ceasing rapidly to exist.

are conveniently accessible at the City Hall of that place. Other leading sheets, most of which are in the Library of Congress, were the *Atlas*, and *Courier* of Boston, the *Evening Post*, *Courier and Enquirer*, *Herald*, *Tribune*, *Sun* and *Courier des Etats Unis* of New York, the *Ledger* and *North American* of Philadelphia, the *Sun* and *American* of Baltimore, the *Enquirer* of Richmond, the *Courier and Mercury* of Charleston; but the number that must be consulted is much greater. At Mexico the best collection is in the library of the Hacienda (Treasury) Department. The principal papers were the official *Diario*, *El Siglo XIX.*, *El Republicano*, and *El Monitor Republicano*, but the total number worth more or less study was legion. Those published near the fields of operations naturally contained much interesting news. The most important English journal (British Museum) was the *Times*, but the *Morning Chronicle*, *Morning Post*, *Morning Herald*, and several others represented influential constituencies. At Paris, (Bibliothèque Nationale) the *Journal des Débats*, *Le Constitutionnel*, *Le National*, *L'Époque* and others were noteworthy. For Spain *El Heraldo* is enough. The periodicals that can be used more or less extensively with substantial profit number about 400.

³ See the "Account of the Sources," pp. 471-76 of a book on this topic by the author of the present article.

Yet there is—to conclude our cursory survey of the field—a personal source free from the defects just suggested. To avoid both inadequacy and exaggeration one should see Ratón Mountain, Santa Fe, Monterey Harbor, San Pedro, San Diego. Still more is it necessary to inspect the almost vertical steeps climbed by Taylor's men at the "Bishop's Palace" of Monterey, the sand-hills at Vera Cruz, the heights and gorges of Cerro Gordo, the ravines threaded in darkness and storm at Contreras and the rocky fastness of Chapultepec. Hardly less important is a realization of the scenes through which our troops passed on their marches. Here, for example, in the vicinity of Córdoba and Jalapa they find themselves gazing at almost sheer walls clothed with a perfect Eden of tropical vegetation; arcades of verdure on the walls, castles of verdure on the arcades, palaces of verdure on the castles, and cathedrals of verdure on the palaces; verdure everywhere, not only builded, but flowing, dripping, tumbling, spurting, in every hue and shade of living green; torrents and floods of green; billows and surf of green; leaves as broad as a man, leaves as thin as a needle; leaves bursting with venom, leaves that shoot in a fierce green jet like the copper flame of a blowpipe; with here and there a silver cascade sparkling down the mountain side, and now and then drifting perfumes that make the traveller quite forget his eyes; and with birds in green, blue, scarlet and yellow, birds like dark opals, birds that flash by like a musical bullet, singing birds, talking birds. That such things helped the soldiers to bear their hardships and stimulated them to fresh exertions goes without saying. Their diaries and letters confirm this opinion, and a remark of General Scott himself illuminates it; for he said with reference to the noble view of Mexico city, first seen by our army as it came over the mountains from Puebla, "Recovering from the sublime trance, probably not a man in the column failed to say to his neighbor or himself: *That splendid city shall be ours.*"⁹

Far more needful, however, is a personal acquaintance with the people of Mexico, for out of their psychology grew mainly the causes, the course and the results of the war, and it stands

⁹ *Memoirs*, II, 467.

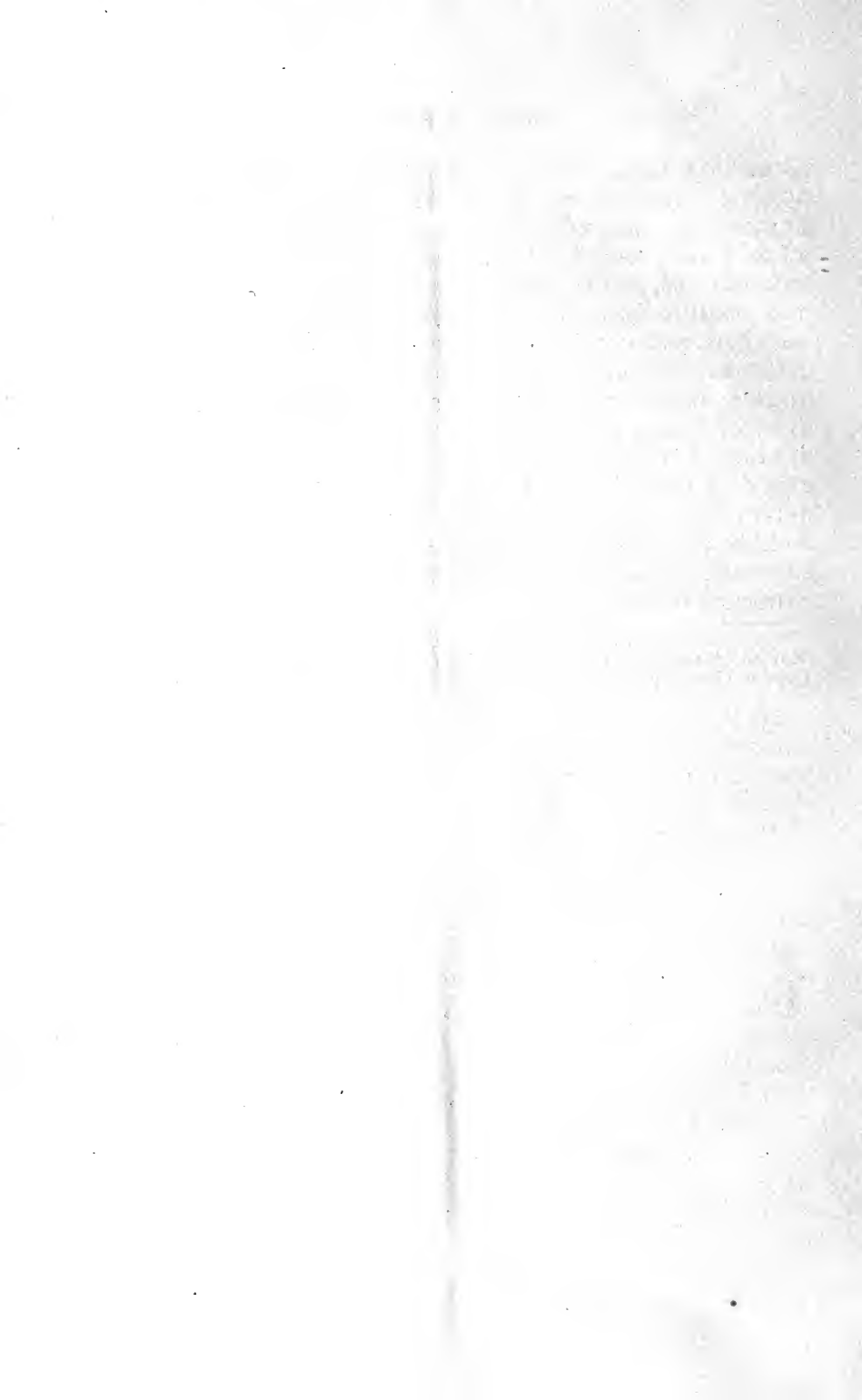
much apart from our own. One has to learn how near to the pride and honor of the Castilian grandee can dwell the duplicity, vanity and vulgarity of the most inferior minds. One has to discover how much more effective a soft, elusive cleverness can sometimes be than our own sharp and forceful smartness. The Indian, sombre and rich in hidden fire like the flint, who was our principal antagonist in the field, repays attention. A dinner party of gentlemen, all friends, becoming so intoxicated with the swift, sonorous accents of their knightly tongue that rapiers appear likely to be the next course is highly instructive; and the daintily slippered ladies, with teeth whiter than milk and soft, black eyes, so deep and languid, explain a great deal in Mexican character and history. The reader, to be sure, will have to accept the results of such observations on faith; but a second-hand impression is very different indeed from one at third hand, and a true interpretation of the facts differs yet more from a false interpretation.

Naturally the question will present itself whether so extended an investigation as that outlined above is worth while. It will be suspected that beyond a certain line only minute points remain to be discovered; and undoubtedly one does reach a place, far short of the end, where the percentage of important new material begins to be low. Some of the most valuable is, however, still before the searcher, and it should not be forgotten that omitting a vital point is worse than a vital error, because less readily detected. There are, too, a number of other good reasons for continuing to delve. Small data frequently prove to be the keystones of arches or missiles that lay low quite pretentious tales. Cumulative evidence, made up of individually slight facts, is often most significant,—confirming, supplementing or refuting many points in the major documents. Numerous errors exist in statements coming from the best accredited sources;* and there are singular omissions, which only the most persistent inquiry enables the historian to supply. Again, one is often saved by minute investigation from natural but unsound inferences. An excellent historical scholar has declared that when Santa Anna returned to Mexico in August, 1846, he was received at Vera

Cruz "as a hero." Since the nation—to speak broadly—was looking to the General as its champion against the United States, this appeared to be a safe statement. But in point of fact the Council (*Ayuntamiento*) of that city had just refused to support the movement in his favor; even his young and pretty wife, pouting with chagrin at the coldness of his reception, was unable to excite any enthusiasm for him; and a tinman, speaking in the name of the people, lectured him soundly in public on his past misdeeds.¹⁰ Besides, even if the investigator examine a mass of material without unearthing a single nugget, he and his readers can feel so much more confident that his conclusions are not likely to be upset by future discoveries. And, finally, it is in this way only that both he and they can acquire that sense of approximate completeness, which was noted in the first place as a particular attraction of the subject.

¹⁰ Ayuntamiento to Landero and Pérez, Aug. 1, 1846: Vera Cruz archives. Ruxton, *Adventures*, 17, 18. *Tributo á la Verdad*, 14. Comandante of Vera Cruz to Guerra y Marina, Aug. 22, 1846: Archives of G. y M., Mexico.

JUSTIN H. SMITH





Makers
Syracuse, N. Y.
PAT. JAN. 21, 1908

